Payment of Royalty to Assam on account of Petroleum Products

972. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of amount of royalty the State Government of Assam has been paid/is to be paid on account of Petroleum and Natural Gas in respect of preceding five years;

(b) whether the State Government has demanded enhancement thereof; and

(c) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) The amounts of royalty paid by ONGC Ltd. and O.I.L. to the Government of Assam during the last five years are as follows:—

(Rs. in crores)

Year	Amount	
	Crude oil	Natural Gas
1993-94	252.24	3.51
1994-95	254.48	3.13
1995-96	250.61	3.13
1996-97	263.30	4.03
1997-98	279.12	5.84

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Payment of royalty is regulated under the provisions of the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948, as amended by Parliament from time to time. In view of the changed environment, certain amendments to the said Act are considered necessary.

Clearance to Oil Exploration Proposals

973. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are planning to clear long-pending proposals of oil exploration and production;

(b) the number of such proposals pending with Government alongwith the details thereof;

(c) whether fresh guidelines will be issued to expedite clearance of oil exploration proposal; and

(d) if not, the reasons for delay?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) Oil exploration is a continuous activity. ONGC and OIL, the Public sector upstream companies are carrying oil exploration in different parts of the country within their delegated powers.

Government of India had during 1992-96 approved award of 35 exploration blocks against various bidding rounds. Against these 35 awards, 9 Production Sharing Contracts have already been signed. Further for 18 exploration blocks, Government have indicated their willingness for signing the contracts. Awards in respect of 5 exploration blocks have since been closed and in respect of remaining 3 blocks, final decision has not yet been taken.

Government of India had also approved awards for development of 11 small sized discovered fields and 1 medium sized discovered fields by private companies. The contracts against these awards for these fields have not been finalised as yet.

(c) and (d) Government of India has announced NELP (New Exploration Licensing Policy) to attract investment for exploration of Oil & Gas in the country.

Flaring of Natural Gas

974. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the value of natural gas which is flared up every day from Bombay High